

Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 39

Saturday, September 27, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

PLAY IT COOL

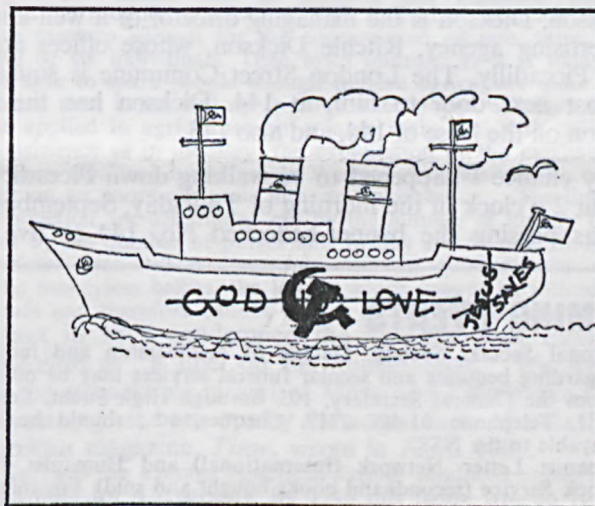
FOR MANY YEARS there has been constant, and sometimes markedly heated, discussion in humanist circles as to the degree of militancy humanists should adopt in their attempts to secularise society. Indeed this question is aired frequently in the columns of this newspaper.

Humanists seem to be a widely assorted bunch and on this particular question there is perhaps a greater diversity of opinion than on almost anything else. There are those who at the mention of religion, and especially Catholicism, are prone to froth liberally where people normally froth in such circumstances, gesticulate alarmingly and seem in danger of giving up a proverbial, but decidedly non-metaphysical ghost. I have heard these described as both hot atheists and cold gossellers. At the other end of the scale are those humanists who on hearing that someone is religious jump out of their seats, shake them by the hand, scrutinise them minutely and ask how they managed it. These are those who say they would love to be religious if they could, but they unhappily can't. They regard the religious with a certain awe and seem to wish they could have the same self-confidence.

Most of us, needless to say, fall somewhere in between, and like true compromisers our minds are not made up. We tackle each 'religious case' as we come to it. Sometimes we may adopt an aggressive attitude while at others we are more conciliatory. In considering degrees of aggression it may be worthwhile to consider what is happening in Russia. Though the government runs the Orthodox church, it is at the same time very forceful in its condemnation of, and campaign against, religion. The religious in Russia, who will have nothing to do with the Orthodox church, fall mainly into two groups, the Russian Old Believers and the Baptists. And apparently the activities and numbers of these two sects are growing. Because of this the Soviet government newspaper, *Izvestia*, has surveyed the "growth of religious fanaticism in the heartland of the Russian Federation 52 years after the victory of the Bolshevik revolution". Various somewhat surprising facts have come to light—that believers regularly hold religious services in their homes, with the tacit approval of their fellow non-religious villagers—that some town soviets are bringing up their children "in preparedness for life eternal, not temporal"—in certain regions religious holidays are observed, which are not sanctioned by the government—and so on.

The latest extraordinary occurrence has been the discovery that certain evangelical Christians are using a chain-letter system to spread the word in small towns and villages of the Volga regions. The unsigned "pastoral" letters reach a wide section of the population via the Soviet postal services. They ask the recipient to write out nine copies and send them on to friends, relatives or acquaintances. Those who co-operate are promised "heavenly happiness", while those who do not receive the stern warning, "in the fullness of time you will have no one but yourself to blame". *Izvestia* is furious that "in this day and age there are volunteers prepared to copy out and mail underground religious letters. How can this happen in our times?"

It happens because the government is involving itself with a question with which it should have nothing to do. Not only is it using its propaganda machine to preach



atheism, but it forces all religions but its own, even by religious standards, farcical Orthodox church to go underground. The quite shattering naivete of the Soviet government is further testified to by their blaming the religious revival on the inefficiency of scientific atheists "who act like a fire brigade dousing religious fanaticism when it flares us, then hang up their equipment, leaving the embers to smoulder on". This is a particularly ludicrous assessment when one considers that the government has had 52 years in which to stamp out religion, with force, coercion, loaded propaganda and "scientific atheists".

That the government is not only infantile but very worried is indicated by their latest move, which is considerably more worthy of Lewis Carroll or Spike Milligan than any government. They have sent an "atheist missionary ship" to cruise the inland waterways of Vologda province. The mind suffers severe boggling when trying to conceive what this might accomplish.

From this British humanists may not learn much practical, but at least we must take note and not only leave our hoses behind, but play it cool.

Freethinker

Published by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.

Editor: David Reynolds

The views expressed by the contributors to FREETHINKER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

THE PICCADILLY SQUAT

Who are the Homeless? Face the Facts, the report published by 'Shelter' recently, showed clearly that the government attitude to housing is sadly devoid of realism. 'Shelter' reckon that rather than the government figure of 18,689 homeless people, the figure is really well over one million. For there are 1.8 million houses officially condemned as 'unfit', in which people have to live.

Following on this severe jolt, the public and the government are receiving another acute prod from the London Street Commune. This body, widely regarded as a hooligan element because of the press's predilection for using the words 'hippy', 'anarchist', 'long-haired', etc., as terms of denigration, has been afforded a well-deserved respectability, largely through the actions of one man, Mr Wylton Dickson. Dickson is the managing director of a well-known advertising agency, Ritchie Dickson, whose offices are at 142 Piccadilly. The London Street Commune is squatting almost next door to him, at 144. Dickson has the first option on the lease of 144, and also 143.

By chance I happened to be walking down Piccadilly at about 2 o'clock in the morning of Thursday, September 25. I was passing the banner-bedecked No. 144 as five fire

COMING EVENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Humanitas Stamps: Send all unwanted stamps to Mrs A. C. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, RM7 8QX, Essex. Proceeds to Humanist charities.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. Cronan and McRae.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. Mosley.

INDOOR

All Ireland Humanist Conference, Hotel Nuremore, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan: October 25 and 26: Brochure from Mr S. Potter, Swains Hill, Ballykeel, Holywood, Co. Down. Tel. Holywood 2863.

Chelmsford Humanist Group: The Carpenters Arms, Baddow Road, Chelmsford: Tuesday, September 30, 8 p.m.: Social evening.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, September 28, 3 p.m.: 71st Annual Reunion—The Guest of Honour, Mr H. J. Blackham, BA, will speak on "Being British". Tea at 5 p.m. and Songs by Unity Singers.

Worthing Humanist Group: Morelands Hotel (opposite the pier): Sunday, September 28, 5.30 p.m.: "Humanism and Politics", Peter Jackson, MP (Secretary, Parliamentary Humanists).

engines arrived, apparently, it transpired later, as the result of a false alarm. I was surprised to find amongst the crowd on the pavement a small group of elderly gentlemen, almost to a man wearing flat caps, impassionately exhorting the confused firement to 'get 'em out' and "chuck" 'em in gaol". Very strange when one considers that in contrast Mr Dickson is amongst other things, to quote *The Times*, 'a keen member of the Beef and Burgundy Club'.

Here we have a man, whom we can fairly presume has a home of above average quality, supporting a left-wing group, who are striving to aid the homeless. While a group of men, whom one can fairly conjecture have probably spent many years waiting for council houses, demanding that the first brigade see to it that the agitators are put in prison.

At the time of going to press, Dickson has offered the squatters the basement of 144 Piccadilly as a place to house transient homeless people, whose need is genuine. He has further offered them a rent and rate-free office "to conduct a proper rehousing bureau in a business-like manner". Dickson has also asked the squatters to redecorate 144 Piccadilly—a task for which they will be paid. This is all subject to Dickson's company taking their option on the lease, and to the approval of the overall landlords.

The overall landlords, the West End Development and Property Trust Ltd., have meanwhile taken out an eviction order. Dickson has sent a message to the Prime Minister pleading that any eviction should be carried out as humanely as possible. He has gone to the lengths of proposing that, in the event of a police eviction, an elaborate temporary camp be set up on the island in the middle of Hyde Park Corner—a camp made up of Territorials, the WVS, and if necessary probation officers, local housing officials and so on.

Dickson is obviously a supreme realist. But it is a pity that such men have to be goaded into activity, instead of going out to find it. More examples of this enlightened, realistic and humane attitude would serve to increase the awareness of those who so belligerently fight against their own best interests.

STUDENT TEACHERS OPPOSED TO RI

STUDENT TEACHERS have taken an important step towards freeing themselves from courses in religious education. At the recent Colleges of Education Specialist Conference of the National Union of Students the following motion was passed: "Conference recognises that religion is a matter for the individual conscience and therefore notes with concern that many colleges of education have compulsory courses in religious education. Conference also notes that in many cases students wishing to opt out of religious education for conscientious reasons find it difficult and in some cases impossible to do so. Conference therefore demands that no College of Education Student should be required to take a course in religious studies unless he specifically requests to do so".

The motion was introduced by Michael Lloyd-Jones, the President of the Students Union at the Berkshire College of Education and an executive member of the National Secular Society. The size of the majority in favour of the motion represents quite a victory, when it is borne in mind that there is a large number of religious colleges, who strongly opposed the motion.

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IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM

R. STUART MONTAGUE

A WRITER in FREETHINKER (August 2, 1969) begins his article by quoting Rosa Luxemburg as declaring that "Marxism lays claim only to temporary truth; dialectic through and through, it contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction". If the world renowned Marxist ever made such a contradictory statement it is meaningless by extraction from context.

Marxism founded on the materialist conception of history or historical materialism lays claim that economic modes of production have a temporary historical truth; dialectic through and through, contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction.

The first social relations of men in producing the means of life was primitive communism. Quantitative growth of the products of labour created a surplus above the needs of simple existence which caused a qualitative change from common ownership to private property and slavery such as the slave economy of Greece and Rome.

Continuing conflict between the developing productive forces and relations of production resulted in another qualitative change to the feudal system. From the womb of feudalism was born our present bourgeois order of world capitalism. Marx's materialist conception of history is proved correct; the inherent dialectical laws of historical change are a permanent Marxian truth.

If Marxism is a temporary truth is world capitalism the final historical mode of wealth production? Is humanity eternally doomed to all the horrors of bourgeois society?

Heinrich Heine wrote: "Change is the only thing eternal, naught is lasting only death". Quantitative growth of the forces of wealth production cannot be halted and produce increasing conflict, contradiction, chaos and economic crises amongst all the national capitalist powers competing in a death struggle to sell their commodities on the world's markets.

Sooner or later the quantitative growth of potential abundance must reach the nodal point of the next historical qualitative change from the capitalist mode of production to the return to common ownership and production for use on a higher economic and social level.

But the future world of socialism is not inevitable for capitalism can also end in all men being cremated equal in a third world war.

Marxism is no more a temporary truth than Darwinism. Marx discovered the dialectical laws of forces and conflicts of historical change and development in human society. Darwin discovered the dialectical laws of evolution in the struggles and conflicts in organic nature—the world of biology.

Fields of research, discoveries and developments in political and economic history in the twentieth century have modified but also reinforced and supplemented the social and historical theories of Karl Marx. This applies also to Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories in the world of nature.

The scientific truths of Marxism are slowly being assimilated in the natural progress of social science and can be understood and accepted without mention of Marx. The laws of gravitation are understood and accepted without mention of Newton and there is no Newtonism in physics. Evolution in the animal world is discussed without mention of Darwin. Materialist dialectical logic in nature and social and economic history can be understood without reference to Marx and Engels.

One day the separate schools of thought will be absorbed

in the general scientific knowledge of the world and become part of it. The young Marx in his early writing suggested that: "History itself is a real part of natural history, of the development of Nature into man. Natural science will one day incorporate the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate natural science; there will be a single science".

Another important issue raised by the FREETHINKER writer is Marx and Engels on the Malthusian theory of population. He says that, "Marx did not explain how overpopulation would be prevented in the reconstructed society". Pressure of population is just one of the problems of capitalist society and not of world socialism.

Frederick Engels wrote in March 1865, over a century ago: "The Malthus theory itself has long ago been reduced to a rational scale by the economists; the pressure of population is not upon the means of subsistence but upon the means of employment; mankind is capable of increasing more rapidly than modern bourgeois society can stand. To us a further reason for declaring this bourgeois society a barrier to development which must fall". Engels goes on to describe how the growth of bourgeois forces of production:

raise the productive power of each individual so much that he can produce enough for the consumption of two, three, four, five or six individuals. Then town industry as it is today will be able to spare people enough to give agriculture quite other forces than it has had up to now; science also will then at last be applied in agriculture on a large scale and with the same consistency as in industry; the exploitation of the inexhaustible regions fertilised by nature in Western America will be carried out on an enormous scale hitherto unknown. . . . The limits of production are determined not by the number of hungry bellies but by the number of purses able to buy and to pay. Bourgeois society does not and cannot wish to produce any more. The moneyless bellies, the labour which cannot be utilised for profit and therefore cannot buy, is left to the death-rate.

Marx in 1865 condemned the Malthus book *Essay on Population* as "a libel on the human race!" We witness how the remarkable insight of Marx and Engels one hundred years ago is born out by the actual facts of today. The American magazine, *Time*, wrote in April 1963:

In 1860 the average American farmer produced enough food and fibre for 4.5 persons. By 1940 this figure rose to 10.5, by 1950 to 14.5 and by 1963 to 27. And according to the Agriculture Department 'the US is in the foothills of technical progress in agriculture—not the peak'. US farmers are paid billions of dollars to produce less and the storage and handling of surplus food 'costs alone roughly a billion dollars a year'.

Richard Beeston in Washington writing in the *Daily Telegraph* (July 1, 1969) said "Not farming land can be an extremely agreeable and profitable occupation. It can pay for a holiday in the Bahamas or Europe, a string of race horses or just a very comfortable way of life rarely enjoyed by the wage earners in the city. There is some dispute among farmers about which are the most profitable crops not to farm—some like to stick to wheat and corn, others favour cotton or dairy produce, for there is a wide range of commodities for which the State will pay them not to produce. At present some £500 million are paid each year for the non-production of wheat, cotton and corn alone. 25,000 farmers get subsidies very much higher than £2,000 a year and six farmers in the country get £400,000 each. Senator James Eastland, a vocal critic of America's welfare programmes, receives over £40,000 a year for not farming his estates in Mississippi".

How long can such a crazy, lunatic social system last? Millions of the world's population are starving to death in

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OUT OF CYNICISM AND PITY...

JEAN PIERRE ALLAIN

THE KIND OF emotional scar, trauma or shock the mind sustains, over very many years, through the nefarious influence of 'fringe' religions or churches, to say the least, can be both alarming and depressing.

I, for one, after some 30 years in one of these churches, will try to depict *currente calamo* some of my major observations, anguish, disillusion, and ultimate disgust and dismay, in the very midst of the movement—a movement which blossomed into existence, in USA, some 125 years ago, through one Henry Miller who propounded the most phenomenal theory, based on some prophetic visions of Daniel the prophet, that God would start judging mankind in 1844 AD. Originally, Miller hinted that in 1844 the world would come to an end, so much so that in America on that very year many 'Adventists', in white gowns, men and women, stood on hills, waiting for the advent of God!

Ultimately, one Adventist, namely a prophetess named Sister Ellen G. White, whilst accepting the theory of Miller, reframed it and stressed this time that as from 1844 AD God would *start* judging mankind, in heaven, with Jesus acting as advocate for many. . . . Hence, if I understood fully the doctrine, for 125 years in heaven, God has been systematically passing judgment on millions of dead individuals, both good and bad. And, according to Adventists, the whole exercise is still going strong . . .

Back to my personal experiences. I was born and bred in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, like most of my forebears who were probably the very first Protestants to accept the 'truth' as presented by Miller, Mrs White *et al.* In our little island, Mauritius, slightly bigger than the Isle of Wight, in view of our new faith, we were invariably looked upon by other Christians—Protestants and Catholics—as fanatics, eccentrics, or just plain daft individuals. At school we all got the nickname 'Badaut', for the movement first flourished in Mauritius under the aegis of one French pastor named Paul Badaut—a very energetic and ruthless firebrand who, from what I gathered from my parents, could not stand Catholics.

After pastor Badaut, we had quite a number of Swiss pastors. And I grew up under their influence. My first doubts arose out of the blue. In my early thirties, I was always amazed to note that our pastors were invariably well dressed, smart as Beau Brummel, well-paid and, of course, well housed and well fed. Yes, in a small island where the bulk of the population lives below poverty level, where maids, artisans and labourers still earn today not more than £10 to £20 *per month*. Some 20 or 30 years ago, the wage level was even lower. Our pastors could then have maids at £4 or £5 *per month*!

Further, to make matters worse, I also realised that we, the church members of a self-supporting movement, were directly paying for the services (*sic*) of our pastors, paying for their maids, their cars, holidays in Switzerland, through a most cunning system, namely the tithe. Indeed, every month, we all paid out 10 per cent of our meagre salary/wages to the pastor, even if we earned only £4 or £6 a month. Those who did not pay were held to be thieves.

As a church member, the kind of brainwashing one gets, especially on the Sabbath—the Jewish Sabbath—is something that goes beyond the realms of fiction. Thus, we were conditioned into believing that, as from Friday evening, we had to rest: no hot meals, no shopping, no sport, no danc-

ing, no alcoholic drinks, etc., until sunset on Saturday. Although I was an outstanding athlete, sprinter, weight-lifter, I was urged to fight shy of *all* sports meetings—which were all held on Saturdays, at home—and was even led to accept the strange doctrine that practising sports on Saturdays was a *sin*. Somehow, Nature worked it differently for me. I ignored the pastor's injunctions and took part in very many football matches, athletic contests, and, to make matters worse for me, I hit the headlines! Naturally, I was a real embarrassment for the Church and the whole movement. I was, therefore, looked upon as a freak member in our religious community.

But I paid a very heavy penalty for my transgressions. I always came back from a football game or a weight-lifting session with an all-embracing feeling of guilt, aggravated by the sermons and lamentations of my mother, pastor or religious-minded friends. The net result was a long bout of migraine that lasted for hours. Over the years the migraine plus the sense of guilt, or the sense of quiet 'rejection' by my church and my parents, gave me regular stomach pains. Finally, I developed a duodenal ulcer!

Looking back over all these wasted years, I cannot help feeling bitter and forlorn about the whole hoax perpetrated upon us by people who were nothing but counterfeits and parasites. Parasites who preyed upon the credulity of care-free islanders, poor artisans, shoemakers, fishmongers who were all told that the 'package deal' above all meant tithing,—what a business!—leaving aside tea, coffee, spices, even meat, fish and eggs. I gather, in passing, that at Watford, at the SDA boarding school, the inmates *never* eat eggs, and meat or fish.

Socially, we were worse than monks: no parties, no dancing, no booze, no cinema, no jewellery for the girls. Preferably no contacts with non-believers. Needless to say, as kids, our style of life was altogether artificial. We longed and craved for friends, Catholics, Protestants, but overtly or secretly we were told not to join Catholic Clubs, or Protestant Scouts Groups. In a sense then, as SDA children, living on a small island slightly more than 700 square miles in area, we were little 'islands' in the middle of our own island. At school, we were often a group apart. We had 'our' own brand of religious instruction, with the emphasis on the 'Sabbath' (*viz.* Saturday and *not* Sunday). We read only certain types of books. At home, mother warned us, day in and day out, against authors like Maupassant, Voltaire, Anatole France or Rousseau.

And so, for some thirty years—it sounds incredible—we took it all in our stride.

Yet, over the years, I could well nigh see that the Adventist faith or Church—God's bride!—by itself did not change a whit the Adventists or their children. Starting from the humblest member of the church to the cocky pastor, or President of our Mission, I often noticed in very many brothers and sisters clear-cut signs of religious neurosis, hallucinations—in this context, let me add that quite a number of Adventists in Mauritius, USA, and Europe, for quite a long time, have asserted in good faith that they have heard 'voices', or have had prophetic dreams, messages, etc., but, for obvious reasons the Movement is altogether quiet about the whole phenomenon!—mental or spiritual aberrations which more than once gave me a lot of food for thought. Worse still, I also often saw patent and disturbing examples of inverted or perverted spiritual

snobbery. Thus, as a rule, European pastors *always* earned more than their black, brown or yellow counterparts. Pastors always frequented a certain clique, the *gros bonnets* or wealthy group of the temple or movement. And above all, again in respect of pastors, I also noticed in them an unusual degree of bland and smug self-assurance in spiritual matters. Or in money matters. Most of them often harped on the theme 'never give a thought for tomorrow'. But, they were the selfsame people who always looked closely at their purses, who often dabbled in antiques, stamps, who saved carefully their Rupees, Francs or Dollars, to give ultimately to their offspring the very best education in Europe, as Doctors, Scientists and so on.

So, after some 30 years, the game came to an abrupt end. By that time I had read, re-read and digested the whole of Voltaire, Alain, Anatole France, Ingersoll, Rousseau and others, especially Bertrand Russell.

When I came to Europe in 1956, to settle for good in Great Britain I got some more valuable books and magazines. I regularly read *The Humanist* and the *Freethinker*, and at Collet's found some more valuable materials for my own psychological and philosophical edification.

My conclusion about fringe religions, based on extensive and intensive reading and practical experience, is beyond challenge: the whole movement is the biggest hoax of modern times, and as such has lured millions into avenues which have no meaning and no exits. The weak-willed are regularly exploited, conned, and deprived of hard-earned cash. The more intelligent? To be candid, I never met a

genuine scholar in our movement!

Indeed, the pattern of all fringe religions is invariably the same: a prophet or prophetess (*always American!* and never Chinese, Russian or African) has dreams or revelations and *de facto* becomes the mouthpiece of God, to proclaim that the *new church* is the *only church* preaching the *true* and unalloyed gospel.

Next church members are recruited, by hook or by crook. And the most modern methods of high pressure salesmanship are always used to convince individuals that mankind is going adrift, that we are on the brink of a world-wide conflagration, that the East is ready to tackle the West, that man in his essence is, by definition, bad and wicked . . . *ad nauseam*, and that the only way out of the whole inferno is to pray, to pay the tithe and to go back to church . . . and, to let the pastor preside over your destiny!

No. I have no longer any fears for tomorrow. I live for my family, my work, my books, my hobbies, and naturally for my fellow-creatures. I have today very many Catholic friends. Protestant or Moslem friends too. I relish a good piece of roast pork and a good glass of wine.

I am no longer interested in Hell or Paradise. My firm belief is that we make or unmake our own hell or paradise. It is all in our own mind, manipulated over the early years by our own selfish or stupid parents, teachers or pastors.

May I also add that my duodenal ulcer has vanished into thin air . . . a long time ago.

ON BEING FAIR TO GOD

NICHOLAS GRIFFIN

IN PAUL ZIFF'S paper "About 'God'"¹ the following argument occurs:

It is a tenet of present physical theory that no physical object can attain a velocity greater than the speed of light. Consequently, according to present physical theory, no being has it in its power to transport a stone from the earth to the sun in one second. But this is to say that no omnipotent being exists. Hence, according to present physical theory, nothing answering to the plain man's conception of God exists.

Present physical theory may be mistaken; that is always possible. But that possibility is irrelevant here. For no matter what form physical theory may take in the future, it seems reasonable to suppose that it will impose certain limits on experience: the existence of limits is incompatible with the existence of an omnipotent being.

This argument is ingenious and, as far as I know, original. However, it seems to me, that the argument doesn't do what Professor Ziff wants it to do. In this piece I want to examine why I think this is to be the case and also to consider what, more limited, conclusion the argument does support.

It should be made clear, to begin with, that the argument doesn't prove that God doesn't exist, nor even that an omnipotent being doesn't exist. Moreover, Professor Ziff doesn't claim that it proves either of these two statements. What Professor Ziff claims it proves is that the existence of any omnipotent being is incompatible, first of all, with present physical theory, and then, more generally with any physical theory. Thus Professor Ziff hopes to force the religious believer who believes in an omnipotent God into choosing between his God and the possibility of any form of physics and the consistent lack of evidence for God, any rational man in such a dilemma would have good grounds for accepting physics and rejecting God. The argument, if

valid, whilst not disproving God's existence, at least weights the dice heavily against it.

The point at which Professor Ziff's argument breaks down, I believe, is in his account of what a physical theory does. According to Professor Ziff it "imposes certain limits". This is not so: physical laws are descriptive not prescriptive, they describe rather than legislate about what is the case. A physical law is of the form "so-and-so is not observed to happen" not "so-and-so can't happen", and it is only the existence of the "can't" that is incompatible with an omnipotent being. It could be that God exists, and is omnipotent, and yet has never done anything that would break the fundamental principle of relativity that nothing travels faster than light. This possibility is not denied by relativity. I am not saying that it is at all likely that this is the case (I think it most unlikely) but merely that Professor Ziff's argument does not prove that it is not.

There are other possibilities. That things have travelled faster than light when propelled by God but we haven't seen them, or perhaps God has prevented us from seeing them. (Of course, "seeing" begs the question, for if they travelled faster than light we, *ex hypothesi*, wouldn't see them. "Have any knowledge of them" fits better.) Or it might be that God will, in the future, when the whim takes Him, make them travel faster than light and we will (or will not, as it pleases Him) have knowledge of it. Now these possibilities are denied by relativity, but not because the laws of relativity are prescriptive. The reason is that the law which says that nothing travels faster than light is a universal generalisation: it applies to all objects, past, present and future, known and unknown, and states a cer-

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tain fact about them, extending the scope of the statement from past to future, and from known to unknown, by induction. Because the statement rests upon induction it is to some extent uncertain, and objects travelling faster than light might be discovered (physicists are at the moment searching for such objects called 'tachyons'). If they are discovered then either the theory of relativity will require modification, or the tachyons will be of such a nature as not to conflict with the theory. However, if a stone were moved from the earth to the sun in a second, then clearly this will be incompatible with the universal generalisation that objects never travel faster than light.

A further point may be made about the explanation of such a phenomenon, if it were discovered. Obviously, scientists would get over their original bewilderment and seek some explanation of it, it is also obvious that their explanation will not involve the concept 'God' for modern physicists, like Laplace, "have no need of that hypothesis" This does not, however, mean that God was not responsible for it. If He were it would merely mean that the physicists on account, no doubt, of their lamentable lack of faith, were wrong. But no one, except of course God, would know that they were wrong, and no-one could reasonably blame them for ignoring the possibility of God's intervention, because any physical law that made use of God as a hypothesis would be untestable, and therefore unscientific. As it is the task of scientists to be scientific and as scientific method has had considerable successes to its credit, no physicist would introduce the hypothesis.

The reason that a physical law using the concept of God would be untestable is also related to God's omnipotence. It is because God can do anything that anything can be explained by reference to Him. Whilst it is not the case that scientific laws legislate against possibilities, they do limit actualities by saying "so-and-so is observed to be the case whilst such-and-such is observed not to be the case". Because certain things are denied by every physical law, each such law can be tested and proved wrong if the things it denies prove to be the case. Every scientific law sticks its neck out. Because of God's omnipotence a physical law that made reference to him wouldn't stick its neck out and so wouldn't be testable.

This seems to have brought us back to Professor Ziff's original argument, but this is only apparent. The difference is still there. For in the previous three paragraphs we have been dealing with what would happen to science if God did decide, say, to transport a stone to the sun from the earth in a second. Should God do this relativity would be disproved. But, if God doesn't decide to do this, the possibility of an omnipotent God is not thereby removed, for, Professor Ziff himself argues in the same paper:

That a certain being did not perform a certain task could not in itself establish that the being was not omnipotent. . . . And, that the being performed the task would not establish its omnipotence. (*Ibid.*, p. 100.)

That God doesn't transport a stone to the sun in a second does not prove that He could not do so. Nor does His ability to do so conflict with relativity so long as He doesn't exercise the ability. For, as we have already pointed out several times, relativity merely says that stones *do* not travel faster than light not that they *cannot* do so.

What, then, is Professor Ziff entitled to conclude from his argument? Merely this: that if God is omnipotent then, if physics is to be possible, He musn't reveal the fact. This

sounds a lot and seems to reduce God's scope for intervention in the world. But Professor Ziff has given excellent reasons, in the passage quoted in the paragraph above, for believing that God would find it very difficult to demonstrate His omnipotence by actions. For, whatever He did, it still wouldn't follow that there wasn't something that He couldn't do. He could, indeed, transport stones to the sun in a fraction of a second, but his omnipotence wouldn't be proved, and the clever scientist would find some secular explanation in the manner I have indicated earlier. Of course, if there was no evidence possible that God was omnipotent prudent men would refrain from believing in an omnipotent God, but this would be an argument for agnosticism not atheism. God could decide to break every law in modern physics but, unless he could demonstrate his ability to do this, in principle, for every law a physicist might think of, he would still not have demonstrated that physics was, in principle, impossible. The physicist could bemoan his fate in living in so chaotic a world where satisfactory laws seemed so hard to formulate but he need not give up his faith that some such laws might be found, unless God demonstrated to him that this was impossible. And this, as Professor Ziff has shown, would be impossible, even if God were omnipotent.

¹ Paul Ziff, *Philosophic Turnings* (Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 101.

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The motion does not automatically become NUS policy. However, Lloyd-Jones informs us that he intends to move a similar motion at the NUS Annual Conference in November, which would make it official policy. Judging from the fact that the NUS is already officially opposed to compulsory RE in schools, there would seem every chance of success.

The significance of the student teachers' resolution lies not only in the fact that a majority of student teachers have openly declared their opposition to religious education forming a part of standard teacher's training, but also in the fact that not far in the future there will be a generation of teachers, a substantial majority of whom will be opposed to religious education in principle. This fact bodes very well for the eventual liberation of our children's minds from the unethical imposition of religion, for a government would find it very hard to maintain the existing law in such circumstances.

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REVIEW

DAVID TRIBE

THOUGH UNFAILINGLY FRIENDLY and hospitable the Ukrainian community in London strikes the outsider as obsessed by religious Orthodoxy (and orthodoxy) and *émigré* dreams of bolshevised cherry orchards. The impression isn't so very different, *mutatis mutandis*, from that given to the infidel by Scottish and Welsh Nationalism. With overtones of the tribalism that is tearing apart large stretches of Africa and religionism that rages on all continents and as near home as Northern Ireland, 'national' aspirations within larger states pose threats of world disintegration that can only be alarming. But most people, I suspect, simply look on them as a nuisance. Knowing little of the political issues involved and less of the linguistic and cultural traditions which provide a constant fuel, the average citizen gives the patronising smile of incomprehension. Sometimes he fails to realise how strong the case for some of these national movements is.

Lesya Ukrainka (Toronto and Oxford University Presses, 62s) is, at one level, a persuasive public relations exercise for the cause of Ukrainian independence. Constantine Bida tells the story of Laryssa Kosach (*née* Kosach) (1871-1913), who chose a pseudonym that left no doubt about her passionate patriotism. Harried throughout life and quenched in an early death by tuberculosis, she came of a family of liberal bourgeois intellectuals. In England we are used to this breed which, however out of touch it usually was with the real life of its own proletariat in the nineteenth century, played a dominating and generally civilising role in the social, political and literary life of the country. We do not tend to associate it with 'Russia' (if the shade of *Lesya Ukrainka* will excuse this blanket term). Certainly we know of the famous noblemen who renounced their class to dream wild anarchist, nihilist or communist dreams and live bohemian expatriate lives. And we know of the corrupt and oppressive courtly and bureaucratic world of the czars. But we—or perhaps I should say I—know little of the ground in between: the professional classes which knew the *ancien régime* was intolerable, especially for the peasantry, but feared (with every justification, we can say in retrospect) the excesses of revolution and post-revolutionary (Stalinist) situations. It may be that one of the reasons why the 'Russias' have always seemed so brutally stark in their political and social contrasts is that they were always an essentially male world. Only recently was I aware that some of their important cultural figures among the general population (I had heard of Catherine the Great) were women.

Lesya Ukrainka was not simply a 'Little Ukrainian'. She sought escape from Muscovite domination not to turn in upon a narrow steppeland, but to play a full and independent part in the 'Greater Europe' movement. The motto she adopted was: 'There are no other aims than those of all Europe; there are not other means'. A linguist and woman of broad culture, she did not confine herself to Ukrainian models who are, regrettably, largely unknown to the outside world, but was influenced by the Hebrew prophets, especially Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, Ovid, Homer, Heine, Musset, Novalis and Shakespeare. Like the American negroes she found Jewish imagery both a personal inspiration and a way of making political points that escaped the czar's censors. In a way, uniquely hers, she used classical mythology for the same purpose. These myths were themselves devised with social, if not political, situations in mind, and from the ancient Greeks to today dramatists have used them to make points on war and peace and other political issues. But she gave them an interesting relevance to modern colonialism, time-serving and compromise, that is especially refreshing.

The book is far more than a public relations exercise, for most of it is given to Vera Rich's translations. Some of her lyrics I had already heard recited in the original and translation and been impressed by their wild music (notably in the Ukrainian) and verbal felicities. Most critics would today dismiss this as the 'Georgan manner', but I am sufficiently fuddy-duddy to regret the absence of lyricism and passion in most contemporary writing. With poems of this sort, typified by *Seven Strings*, a cycle based on the tonic sol-fah, the test must be in the hearing; though I should say I found them less satisfactory on the page, where received language and faulty rhymes are more conspicuous. Particularly unsatisfactory in these respects is the ballad *Robert Bruce, King of Scotland*. A certain amount of latitude for poeticisms, inversions and archaisms must be made for verse in the *Border Ballads* tradition, but clumsy rhythm and frequent failure to achieve the rhyme-scheme (at least it seems more like an omission than a commission) are less excusable in this *genre*. Whether these are characteristic of the original I cannot say. But the bulk of the translations are of dramas: *The Stone Host* (a variant of the Don Juan legend), *The Orgy* (legendary antiquity, relating to the selling of artistic souls), *Cassandra* (new twists on the old story).

Until I read these I had an uneasy feeling that Constantine Bida was exaggerating the importance of the poet's plays. He hasn't. Full of moral and philosophical subtleties, they are not dreary moralities with personifications of humours, but vital, moving and witty portrayals of life. The blank verse excellences are too numerous to mention. I shall just quote one example of the appropriate depiction of an attitude that will be familiar to readers:

ANDROMACHE (Cassandra's sister-in-law):

All the same, Cassandra,
Of your truth we have had enough and more,
Evil-presaging, evil-bringing, let us
Live now in hope, even if it is false.
Oh, I am weary with your kind of truth!
O sister, at least grant me dreams and visions!

For this (to me) new world of Ukrainian drama I am immeasurably grateful. The finest tribute to Miss Rich I can give is that the works all read as if they were originals.

Let me close with an extract from the book's *Epilogue*, eloquently portraying the feelings of an irrepressible spirit in the body of an invalid, a 'colonial' and a woman in a patriarchal society:

He who dwelt not among tempests
Cannot strength's true valour savour,
Cannot realise how sweet to
Man are struggle, toil and labour.
He who dwelt not among tempests
Cannot know the grief of weakness,
Cannot realise the torments
Of compelled inaction's meekness.

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the midst of potential plenty because there is no financial profit in abundance.

Can anyone dispute that Marxism is a permanent truth when Engels wrote in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*: "The expansive force of the means of production bursts the bonds that the capitalist mode of production had imposed upon them. Their deliverance from these bonds is the one precondition for an unbroken, constantly-accelerated development of the productive forces, and therewith for a practically unlimited increase of production itself".

At a conference of experts at Oxford in 1960 Lord Boyd Orr stated: "The earth could produce all the food mankind needs if we applied the knowledge we have. If we called in the chemists we could banish hunger. The West grows food not to feed hungry people, but to make a profit".

I suppose it inevitable for the FREETHINKER writer to repeat the old anti-marxist chestnut relating to Marxism and socialism in Russia. Surely no one with the slightest smattering of socialist knowledge believes what is taking place in Russia and China today has anything whatsoever to do with Marxian scientific socialism/communism.

The present possibility of all-out war between the two great "socialist" nations may finally convince them. It is a tragedy the young Russian and Chinese workers and peasants have never heard the four verse of the famous *International* not to mention the chorus. It was at one time the Russian National Anthem.

With the third line it begins:

Let soldiers strike! For peace call louder!
Lay down arms! Join hand in hand!
But should these vile despots still determine
Heroes to make us in despite,
They'll know full soon the kind of vermin
Our bullets hit in this last fight.
Then comrades come rally!
And the last fight let us face,
The International unites the human race!

After further appraisal of the two long articles on "the case against Marxism" I am so overwhelmed by the hotch-potch of concentrated confusion of ideas and Marxian misunderstanding I feel obliged to regretfully retire in utter despair.

LETTERS

Powellism

THANK YOU for your copy of the FREETHINKER . . . I did not know that Mr Enoch Powell qualified, but apparently he does.

Now it is no use grousing about him; there are many facets of Enoch I do not like, but he is entitled to his opinion and as an MP (at least) the right to express it. After all, one must be fair in this matter; the multi-racial society propagandists never had any better right to put over their views than he has to expound his . . . but they have got away with enforcing a fundamental change on the country without any mandate whatever.

It must be firmly understood that the immigrant, *whatever his colour or origin*, has not come to do us a favour, but to help himself. All very laudable, but the propagandists will not have it that way. After all, they started it and are not prepared to accept that there is any fly in the ointment. Immigrants were "herded" into inferior housing at Smethwick, for example, the propagandists blandly overlooking the fact that there was no housing, good or bad into which any body could be herded, the borough having had no building land for over fifty years, being entirely built up . . . but the opportunity to blame the whites of the borough was too good to miss. The present member will be out for the count at the next election; like his predecessor, he is only concerned with looking after immigrants.

Some of your "facts" need looking into. In transport, it is claimed that it would break down without the immigrants. Yet British Rail is *overmanned* by 100,000, so why does it need the additional labour of immigrants? Similarly with the buses . . . true there is a higher proportion of bus crews made up of coloureds than the coloured community warrants . . . but it is only marginal. Don't forget they use the public transport as well marginally to a greater extent than our own people. I marvel daily at the number of coloureds, particularly Asiatics, thronging New Street station . . . the travelling they do and can afford is astounding.

And the hospital service . . . I am in daily contact with it. There are (official) 310 *qualified* Commonwealth nurses in the city, a high proportion geriatric. There again with an estimated 108,000 coloured immigrants in the city, it is only very marginally above the number to take care of their own sick, assuming that the impact of immigrants on the Health services is no greater than that of the indigenous population. . . . The City of Bradford reports that the cost of immigrants to the Public Health Department is *sixty-nine* times as great per capita, as for locally born people. The city has recently issued another report which is even more disquieting, though I have not seen it as yet.

Powellism has come about as a result of deliberately misleading the public; the lack of information, of proper records but far more so by the denial of the existence of conditions that are under peoples' very noses, that they have to face every hour of the day . . . and the exaggerated claims made on behalf of immigrants, so distorted and carried to idiotic lengths as to be downright insulting to the hearers . . . they are *all*, if certain people are to be believed, doctors (specialists, of course), engineers, administrators and so forth, when the truth is they are 95 per cent the lowest type of coolie, totally unused to city life and, according to the Pakistani High Commissioner, a grave problem in their own land. In short, the "facts" we want comprise that rare commodity . . . *the truth*. The public can take it.

Mr Aaron Haynes, the local "aid" for immigrants, has dismissed as totally unrealistic the £2,000 per family as an inducement to return, gives *five* times as much as a more reasonable figure. As the reason for their coming here was given as the conditions of abject poverty in which they lived one wonders how they raised the money to come here in the first place . . . is this another deceit? How many of our long-suffering poor have that kind of money?

And what about the original argument that was put out when the influx started? . . . they have come to acquire skills to take back home, or earn money to start a farm, etc. There was no talk then of permanent residence . . . that was left until the advocates of the so-called multi-racial society had succeeded in getting a substantial number here. The same game is now being played with the dependants racket . . . they talk as though a dependant is some special kind of mortal that does not add to the number or appear in any statistic, or make any impact on housing, welfare, education . . . or apparently, eat anything. No-one ever mentions the cost to our balance of payments of the importation of foodstuffs, but it must be in the region of 100 millions annually . . . we cannot feed them from our own resources . . . and the numbers continue to roll in.

Powellism gets its support in poor localities, for those are where the whole of the burden of immigration has fallen. The stock-

broker belt at Orpington, Torrington, Peebles, or the Western Isles escape (so far) unscathed, and those and similar areas are where the majority of those who lecture us on our lack of humanity, "Christian" attitude and so-forth, live . . . they do not have to put up with the problems they have created.

In short, Mr Editor, the manner in which the defenceless poor have been served by ideologists is one of the most *disgraceful* lapses in our history, and for which there can surely be *no pardon*. A local person, at the time of the Kenyan Asian crisis, pleaded for the raising of a public fund to provide housing for some of the Kenyans . . . I asked why he did not take some of them into his 30-roomed mansion if he felt so strongly about it. Needless to say, no comment.

If it was not Mr Powell, it would be somebody else, someone possibly merely looking for trouble and not really concerned with the future of the *British* people.

E. C. KESSELER.

Czechoslovakia

MICHAEL CREGAN is indignant about my comments on Czechoslovakia in my article, 'The Statue of Liberty'. He observed, in his letter of September 6, that they are fatuous, which, according to my dictionary, means weak, silly, idiotic. Hardly complimentary, but my best answer is to deal with his points. He objects to my statement that there was no invasion, as the Czechs understood it. I can only repeat that—as he should know, if he carefully read the reports—the term 'invasion' was disparaged by prominent nationals. He infers that the occupation was comparatively bloodless because the Czechs did not resist. Naturally so, but the Czechs showed no inclination to resist. I must remind Mr Cregan that, as a whole, they are communists, and that their leaders frequently affirmed loyalty to their party's principles. The people walked freely in the streets, and press pictures showed them to be in anything but an oppressed mood.

Mr Cregan asserts that the occupation was carried out against the manifest wishes of the Czech population. I saw no manifestation of that, neither did he. What he and I saw were the demonstrations of an insignificant few, chiefly youngsters. It was they who threw stones, drew swastikas on the tanks and argued with the troops—not, by a very long chalk, the nation. If Mr Cregan wants to be fair, he must judge other nations, too, by the acts of their youthful revolutionaries.

But my critic by-passed the chief feature of my article, the abominably provocative policy of containment by America, of communism, by the establishment, through the bribery of states, of nuclear bases at many points, with nuclear guns pointed towards Russia. The chief purpose of my article was to show that Russia had great cause for her action in Czechoslovakia. I wanted readers to look through Russian eyes as well as those of her inveterate enemies. I regret, as much as anyone, that the Iron Curtain countries do not permit freedom of thought. Nevertheless, they are nearer to it than they were twenty, or even ten years ago. The prospect of their allowing it in full will be greatly enhanced when the Free West shows them, by example, goodwill instead of nuclear bases directed at them from all sides, even right on their borders.

F. H. SNOW.

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